

6-15-24 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene – *Shavuot*
Torah Portion; Numbers 4:21 – 7:89
Haftarah: Judg 13: 2-25
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Acts 2:1-21

Under the Law Part 9 – Pentecost is Not the “Birthday of the Church”

Central question of this message: Do you recognize the replacement theology in that statement?

Today we are in parashah *Naso*, which means “to elevate.” It derives its name from the second phrase and is commonly translated into English as “take”.

Num 4:21-24

21 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 22 "Take a census of the sons of Gershon also, by their fathers' households, by their families; 23 from thirty years and upward to fifty years old, you shall number them; all who enter to perform the service to do the work in the tent of meeting.

וַיִּדְבֹר 21 יְהוָה אֶל- מֹשֶׁה לֵּאמֹר:
And spake the Lord unto Moses, saying,
1696 3068 413 4872 559

נָשָׂא 22 אֶת- רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי גֵרְשֹׁן גַּם- הֵם
Take the sum of the sons of Gershon, also them
5375 853 7218 1121 1648 1571 1992

לְבֵית לְאִבְתָּם לְמִשְׁפַּחָתָם:
throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families;
1004 1 4940

מִבֶּן 23 שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וְנִמְעָלָה עַד בֶּן- חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה
From old thirty years and upward until old fifty years
1121 7970 8141 4605 5704 1121 2572 8141

תִּפְקֹד אוֹתָם כָּל- הַבָּא לַעֲבֹד צָבָא לְעֵבֶד
shalt thou number them; all that enter in to do the service, to perform
6485 853 3605 935 6633 6635 5647

עֲבֹדָה בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:
the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.
5656 168 4150

Shavuot begins tonight, and I will get to that issue below. But let's discuss what has happened in the normative synagogue last Tuesday (as modern Judaism reckons the timing of Shavuot).

In the normative synagogue, it is common to celebrate the holy day of Shavuot for two days. On both days, two Torah scrolls are removed from the Ark. On the first day the first scroll is opened to Exodus 19 and 20, which tell of the giving of the Ten Commandments. During the reading of the Ten Commandments, the custom in many synagogues is to stand. This replicates the posture of our people who stood at the foot

of the mountain and heard G-d's proclamation of those instructions. Then the second scroll is rolled to Numbers 28:26-31, which tells of the special sacrificial offerings for Shavuot.

On the second day of the celebration the first scroll is turned to Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17, which deals with the laws of tithing, release of debts in the seventh year, the release of slaves every seventh year, and an account of the three pilgrimage festivals of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot.

The theme of these traditional readings seems to be either the festival of Shavuot itself, or some very important spiritual events which occurred on that day, such as the giving of the Torah at Mt. Horeb.

As the Greek language became one of common usage in Israel, the Greek name for the festival of Shavuot, being "Pentecost" (meaning "fifty count") became a prominent name for that festival as well. And it is the name that shows up in Scripture as well in the Brit Chadasha (renewed covenant). All Hebrew men were required to come to the Temple on Shavuot.

Ex 34:21-24

21 "You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest. 22 **And you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks, that is, the first fruits of the wheat harvest,** and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. 23 **Three times a year all your males are to appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel.** 24 For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders, and no man shall covet your land when you go up three times a year to appear before the Lord your God.

So, we can see how it is that many men from many other nations had made the pilgrimage to the Temple for Shavuot during the time that Yeshua walked among us as a man.

Yeshua had indicated that something important would happen on that day, as He instructed His followers to remain in Jerusalem to experience that upcoming event.

Luke 24:44-49

44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and

the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 "You are witnesses of these things. **49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."**

Thus, He hinted at yet another important event that would happen on Shavuot, and He gave them the reason for why they should be there – to be witnesses to those gathered ones of what He had done. And they were in the Temple on the appointed day. And Scripture records what happened then.

Acts 2:1-21

2 And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on

each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and marveled, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 "And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? 9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs — we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." 12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."

I would like to briefly talk about the “speaking in tongues” issue. I will reserve a more detailed discussion for a later day. I wish to give it some attention today because it figures prominently in how the normative

church has regarded this event in history. I find some confusion in the normative church regarding what “speaking in tongues” actually is, and what it means.

First of all, the Hebrew word translated as “tongues” and “language” is *lashown*.

OT:3956 לָשׁוֹן **lashown** (law-shone'); or **lashon** (law-shone'); also (in plural) feminine **leshonah** (lesh-o-naw'); from OT:3960; the tongue (of man or animals), used literally (as the instrument of licking, eating, or speech), and figuratively (speech, an ingot, a fork of flame, a cove of water):

It has some interesting meanings, which include speech, and the shape of a flame of fire. Those two meanings feature prominently in the passage in Acts chapter 2.

The sweet ones in the normative church have closely associated the descending of “tongues of fire” with “speaking in tongues.” And some have taught that the Spirit came for the first time to believers at this event. To refute that error would take much more space than I am satisfied with using on that topic today, but I will give only a few examples to make the point.

The craftsmen of the articles in the Mishkhan were filled with the Spirit. (Exodus 28-35). The seventy elders chosen to be subordinate judges to Moses were filled with the Spirit. (Number 11). Balam had the Spirit come upon him to bless Israel (Numbers 24). Othniel the Kenezite, the younger brother of Caleb, had the Spirit come upon him as he judged Israel. (Judges 3).

When people would repent and go to the mikvah (ritual immersion) the Spirit would visibly come to rest on them, and then would rise up and would rest on the next one in the mikvah. Our people have known this for generations. It was a sign that their repentance was accepted by G-d. But it was also a sign that would identify the Messiah. That is also seen in Scripture.

John 1:29-34

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.' 31 "And I did not recognize Him, but in order that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."
32 And John bore witness saying, "I have beheld the Spirit

descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 33 "And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' 34 "And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

What was seen in Jerusalem on the day of Shavuot as seen in Acts 2 was not people babbling incoherently. What was happening was that the Spirit gave them the power to speak in ways that they had not yet spoken, in a language that they did not know previously, but in a language and regional dialect that the pilgrims from other nations understood quite well, so that the truth of Yeshua as Messiah could go forth to all the world through these who heard “each in his own language.”

There is also something else we can see in this event that is very important. G-d gave us a small foretaste of a reversal of the curse of Babel.

Gen 11:1-9

11 Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. 2 And it came about as they journeyed east, that they

found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. 4 And they said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." 5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. **7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.**" 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

These people were united in defying G-d, and so He confused their language, to scatter them.

At the Temple in Acts 2, G-d is giving us a glimpse of how it will be in the kingdom, after the L-rd purges from the earth all the rebellious ones and this curse will be removed, and all people will be given a “purified tongue” or “purified lip.” That will be because they are all united in praise of G-d and commitment to His ways.

Zeph 3:8-13

8 "Therefore, wait for Me," declares the Lord, "For the day when I rise up to the prey. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal.

9 "For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, That all of them may call on the name of the Lord, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder.

10 "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, Will bring My offerings.

11 "In that day you will feel no shame Because of all your deeds By which you have rebelled against Me; For then I will remove from your midst. Your proud, exulting ones, And you will never again be haughty On My holy mountain. 12 "But I will leave among you A humble and lowly people, And they will take refuge in the name of the Lord. 13 "The remnant of

Israel will do no wrong And tell no lies, Nor will a deceitful
tongue Be found in their mouths; For they shall feed and lie
down With no one to make them tremble."

There is much more to say about the topic of “speaking in tongues” and its proper (and improper) application to believers in the body today. But that will wait for another day.

Suffice it to say that in Jewish theology (both ancient and modern), there is never an instance of incoherent babbling being confused with speaking in a language so that another might understand. Only in the modern church, and starting to gain ground in the 1960s, do we find this practice having wide-spread acceptance. This one issue has worked a wedge between Jews and Christians like few others.

Now, I wish to address the theological error of the normative church teaching that “Pentecost is the birthday of the church.” I wish to show how it is rooted in replacement theology.

The Catholic site Franciscan media has an article penned by Susan Hines-Brigger, which is entitled “Pentecost: the Birthday of the Church.”¹ It reads, in part.

¹ <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/st-anthony-messenger/pentecost-the-birthday-of-the-church/>

Are you confused by this [birthday] invitation? Did you know that the feast of **Pentecost is often referred to as the birthday of the Church?** It is called that because Pentecost is when the apostles went out among the people and began spreading Jesus' message, thus establishing the beginning of the Church.

Pentecost (Greek for 50th day) is celebrated by Christians 50 days after Easter, **and marks the day that the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles while they were cowering and hiding behind locked doors following Jesus' resurrection.** After receiving the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit, the apostles **immediately went out and preached Jesus' message** to everyone—even those who spoke other languages.

Actually, Pentecost was **originally a Jewish feast** that concluded the 50 days of Passover and celebrated the end of the barley harvest, plus the beginning of the wheat harvest. The Jewish people at Pentecost also celebrate the gift of the law to Moses at Mt. Sinai.

Do you see the replacement theology? It is subtle, but you can see it underlying much of what is being said. In order for the normative church to replace Israel in G-d's plans, Israel must first be separated from Messiah. Let's see how the author of this article achieves that result. First, the article misstates what actually happened. I think this is because doctrine is now more important than accuracy. And if you don't read closely enough, you will accept the author's conclusions without further scrutiny.

There is no evidence that they were "cowering behind locked doors". But they were all in "one place." What was that place? The author presumes they were hiding in the "upper room" in verse 13. But after telling us the people who were in the room together, verse 15 tells us that *at this time* Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about 120 persons). The "upper room" had no such capacity. So, where were they gathered? Could it be the Temple courtyard? How can we know? Because when the Spirit manifested itself upon them, they began speaking in different languages in the presence of all those worshippers from different countries, again a number far greater than any room could contain. But the way it is expressed in the article suggests that there was a hostile separation between believers and ordinary Jews. That idea is consistent with Catholic theology, but not with Scripture's account.

And if you read what actually happened in Scripture, these men weren't at all "spreading Jesus' message" as the article insists. The passage is clear that they were testifying that Yeshua was the Messiah that all Jews were awaiting. They were witnesses and were giving credible testimony to fellow Jews – and 3000 believed that message. And the message they were being given was not foreign to the Judaism of that day. In fact it was central to it. The concept of Messiah has been central to the Jewish faith since the beginning. These men were not starting something new. They were simply showing the fulfillment of prophecy which was already well understood. There is no indication at all that what any of these men said to the assembled peoples in the Temple courtyard suggested a new religion. But it did call those of the existing faith to repentance.

And the article's statement that Pentecost was "originally a Jewish feast" might be the most obvious of all. It suggests that Shavuot/Pentecost is no longer a "Jewish feast" but a Christian birthday celebration. The Catholics have ripped Pentecost out of its proper position as one of G-d's holy festivals in Leviticus 23, and have caused it to stand alone, divorced from its original context, culture, and meaning.

The Catholics are not alone in this error. It has spread to other denominations, and it seems that all have followed them into the same

theological pit. The United Methodists have a similar article, entitled “What is Pentecost.”² It says, in part,

On Pentecost Sunday, we remember the day the disciples received the Holy Spirit in a special way. The story in Acts 2 describes a powerful wind and tongues of fire as **the Holy Spirit was poured out on people from all over the world** who came to Jerusalem to celebrate a Jewish feast. At the first Pentecost **over 3000 people were baptized, creating the first church. This is why Pentecost is known as the birthday of the Christian church.**

The word Pentecost comes from a Greek word meaning fiftieth. **The Jewish Festival of Pentecost** (called Shavuot, meaning "weeks" in Hebrew) falls on the fiftieth day after the original Passover. On that day, God gave the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai. **The Christian festival of Pentecost** falls on the 50th day after the resurrection of Jesus

Now, with a trained eye, you can more clearly see (without further assistance) the underlying rejection of the Levitical festival of G-d, and its replacement by a “Christian festival.”

²<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-is-pentecost>

Have the Baptists done any better? There is one article on line penned by a Baptist leader to his congregation of Cloverdale Baptist Church in Surrey, British Columbia, by Pastor Bob, entitled, “Pentecost: the Birthday of the Church.”³

Pentecost. What does that bring to mind for you?

If you **know your OT well**, it might bring to mind the Feast Of Weeks...a celebration of the grain harvest, and fifty days after the remembering of what God did in gaining victory over Egypt (Passover).

If you **know your NT well**, you will see this word as a reminder of the **coming of the Holy Spirit**, and **the birth of the church** and its centrality to the life of all who love Jesus.

It signals **the beginning of the church age**, and the joy of knowing we can live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The division here is emphasized by featuring what the church now calls the “Old Testament” and “New Testament” which was the invention of Marcion, who was a heretic. But Marcion’s division of Scripture was adopted by the Catholics, and has spread to all other denominations with such strength that no Bible is available today without that divisive title page found dividing the Word.

³ <https://www.cloverdalebaptistchurch.ca/blog/1766/Pentecost-The-Birthday-of-the-Church>

And one more thing, I couldn't help but copy part of the same page where an announcement was made regarding a fellowship event at this church.

Bulletin



Church-Wide Pig Roast Lunch

May 26th / After Service / Fellow. Hall A great way to kick off the summer with a delicious meal and the opportunity to meet new people and connect with others in our church family. All are welcome, you won't want to miss out!

I don't know about you, but I think I'm going to pass on this "delicious meal" and its accompanying opportunity. But this announcement is valuable to demonstrate just how distanced this Baptist church has become from G-d's instructions found in Torah regarding what is... and what is not... food.

So, let's ask now when was "the birthday of the church?" If we are speaking of the church which has rejected the Jewish Yeshua, and replaced him with the goyish Jesus. And if we are talking about the church which has discarded the "Old Testament" (with the notable

exception of 8 of the “big 10” commandments, and a misapplication of the requirement to tithe), then I agree that the “birthday” of that particular church was at the Council of Nicea in 325 CE. Then, with some clever editing, that schism was attributed to the events in Acts 2. But that particular church, with its defiant doctrines, will come to an end at the time Yeshua takes His throne, and it will be absorbed into the true church.

The true church, the *kehillah* (assembly), came into being much earlier. It may have existed as Abraham left Haran with the “souls he had made” (new believers in the G-d of Abraham) in Genesis 12:4. Maybe it was earlier, when Noah entered the ark with his family in Genesis 7. Or maybe it was as late as the time that the mixed multitude stood before Mt. Horeb and were declared by G-d to be “Israel” in Exodus 19. Regardless, it was already well-established as the “cultivated olive tree” of Israel, as described by Paul in Romans 11 long before the Cross. And the Spirit had been active and leading people, and even giving people amazing giftings, long before Acts 2.

Did something amazing happen in Acts 2? Absolutely. But it had been pre-ordained from the foundations of the earth to do precisely what it did do. And that was to create thousands of witnesses to reach the world with the good news of Yeshua, and His Messianic work of atonement. What G-d intended as a unifying act has been turned into division by Satan.